

## NCDOT Wants to Help You Save Time, Money Over Holidays



As families travel over the river and through the woods for celebrations, the N.C. Department of Transportation will suspend most road construction activities on major routes across the state to help make their trips a little smoother. By avoiding traffic delays, motorists can reach their destinations safely and efficiently, while cutting down on fuel consumption and costs. The list of closures will be available closer to the holidays on [our website](#).

For real-time travel information at any time, visit the [Travel section](#) of the NCDOT website or follow NCDOT on [Twitter](#).

Here are some additional tips for navigating the highways safely during the holiday travel season:

- Leave early to get a head start on your drive. Travel at non-peak hours when possible.
- Stay alert. Even if work is suspended, you may encounter narrowed lanes and traffic shifts in work zones.
- Be patient and obey the posted speed limit.
- Use alternate routes, when possible, to avoid traffic congestion.
- Stay informed. Real-time travel information is available online and over the phone by dialing 511.

## Stay Connected



N.C. Transportation  
Now

On the latest N.C. Transportation now, the department shares safety tips for drone use, DMV offices across the state get upgrades for next generation driver licenses, and NCDOT wants to hear what your favorite trails are around the state.

[Watch this week's N.C. Transportation Now](#)

- Don't drive drowsy. Travel at times when you are normally awake, and take frequent breaks.
- Avoid distracted driving. When drivers stop focusing on the road ahead, they react more slowly to traffic conditions and are more likely to be involved in an accident.

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## After Bridge Hit, I-40 West Lane in Haywood County Opens to Traffic



Crews used a very unique method to fix the bridge known as "flame straightening".

The North Carolina Department of Transportation was very busy before Thanksgiving repairing damage to the Interstate 40 Exit 15 Bridge.

Engineers closed the right lane on November 17 when it was discovered three girders under the bridge were damaged when they were struck by a vehicle traveling on Fines Creek Road under it.

Dan Dalton, Inc. repaired the bridge working around the clock to ensure the I-40 West lane would open ahead of the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, notorious as a busy traffic day for motorists. The lane reopened on November 24.

The contractors used a very specialized, unique method to fix the bridge known as "flame straightening," where workers heat the metal beams and reshape the structure returning it to the original shape.

The contractor will return to the site and have daytime lane closures this week for final welding and painting. All work is expected to finish by Thursday, Dec. 10.

The North Carolina Highway Patrol is still looking for the driver that damaged the bridge.

## Governor McCrory Announces Accelerated Timelines for Major Transportation Projects

Governor Pat McCrory announced that the final leg of the eastern section of the Winston-Salem Northern Beltway, the Asheville Connector, the Weddington Road/I-485 interchange and the Mid-Currituck bridge are among the numerous projects that will be accelerated thanks to the reforms of the 2015-17 budget the governor signed into law.

Local, Division 14 projects also being accelerated and additional projects can be found [here](#).

"The reforms I signed into law will get these roads built sooner," Governor McCrory said. "The primary purpose of the reforms was to ensure transportation funds were being spent on transportation projects and not diverted to other state programs."

The budget reforms signed by Governor McCrory added over \$700 million in new funding for transportation over two years and ended the annual transfer of \$216 million from the Highway Fund to the General Fund. Over 10 years, these budget reforms are projected to provide an additional \$1.6 billion for North Carolina Department of Transportation construction projects.

"These budget reforms, coupled with our 25-Year Vision and the new transportation funding formula that emphasizes congestion relief, safety and job-creation will make North Carolina more competitive and prepared for future economic growth," Governor McCrory said.

Significant new and accelerated highway projects made possible by the additional revenue include

- Funding all four sections of the final leg of the eastern section of the Winston-Salem Northern Beltway, which is also part of the Future Interstate 74 corridor (only segment A had been funded). The interchange at U.S. 52 also is funded;
- Accelerating by three years the Weddington Road/I-485 interchange in Mecklenburg County;
- Accelerating by one year into the first five years of the STIP Segment B of the Asheville Connector; and
- Accelerating by two years the Mid-Currituck Bridge, a toll bridge in Currituck County.

The complete list of accelerated schedules for transportation projects was presented to the Board of Transportation for their review at the December meeting last week, with their approval expected in January 2016.



This holiday season, one of the most popular gifts could literally fly off the shelves.

Whether they're called quadcopters, radio controlled planes, or any of the high-tech brand names, drones are expected to be big sellers this year, with some estimating as many as 700,000 will make their way into Americans' homes by the end of December.

All of these devices fall under the category of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). UAS technology is an exciting and evolving field, which can lead to confusion for both UAS owners and the general public. The N.C. Department of Transportation is offering tips to help UAS owners enjoy their new technology while protecting citizens' safety and privacy.

"We're proud of North Carolina's legacy of being first in manned flight," said NCDOT Secretary Nick Tennyson. "The academic and industry researchers in our state will make us a leader in unmanned flight as well."

NCDOT's Division of Aviation has established guidelines for UAS operation in North Carolina. Both the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the NCDOT Division of Aviation classify UAS flight operations by three categories:

- Recreational - Any UAS flight that is conducted solely for the purpose of recreation.
- Government - Any UAS flight conducted by a government entity to support their work.
- Commercial - Any UAS flight that serves a business purpose or provides a business benefit, even if that benefit is indirect.

Government and commercial UAS operators must adhere to state and federal requirements established by the North Carolina General Assembly and the FAA. Each classification is subject to specific regulations and guidelines.

Many of the UAS owners who receive a drone during this holiday season will use them for purely recreational purposes. While recreational UAS flights are not heavily regulated, the FAA and model aircraft enthusiast groups have established a number of guidelines which should be followed to ensure a fun and safe experience:

- Always fly below an altitude of 400 feet and fly within your direct line of sight.
- Do not fly within 5 miles of an airport, near stadiums or other public events, or for compensation.
- Do not fly UAS that weigh more than 55 pounds.

- Do not fly at night, even if your UAS is equipped with lights.

"UAS technology is fun and exciting, but it needs to be used responsibly," said Division of Aviation Director Bobby Walston. "These guidelines will help ensure the safety of people in the air and on the ground."

UAS operators, whether recreational, government or commercial, should keep in mind that North Carolina has laws governing drone use. UAS users are subject to all North Carolina laws, even if UAS technology is not specifically mentioned. Current and potential drone owners can find more information about state and federal UAS regulations on the Division of Aviation's website.

**Steve Abbott**

Communications Manager

Phone: (919) 707.2660

**Ed Green, P.E.**

Division 14 Engineer

**Jack Debnam**

Division 14 Board of Transportation Board Member

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